

# The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

September/October 1995

ISSN 8756-1336

## *Whatever My Lot*

Just after the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, I spent ten weeks in Jerusalem. One afternoon I was invited to have tea with Mrs. Bertha Spafford Vester, who had lived there all of her ninety-one years. A fascinating woman, she was the fifth daughter of Horatio Spafford, who wrote, "It Is Well with My Soul." The story of that beautiful hymn is familiar to many, but Mrs. Vester added details which were new to me.

The great Chicago fire of the 1870s caused Spafford, a wealthy businessman, to take stock of his life. Wanting to know Jesus better, he decided to sell everything and move to the land where He had walked. Shortly before the ship sailed, he was delayed by business, but took the family to New York. For some reason which he was unable to explain he had the purser change their cabin, moving them closer to the bow. He returned to Chicago to finish his business. Then came a telegram: SAVED ALONE. The ship had sunk. Mrs. Spafford had survived. Their four daughters had perished. Had they been in the cabin originally reserved amidships, all five would have drowned, for it was just there that the steamer had been struck by another vessel.

As we sipped tea and munched on Arab sweets, Mrs. Vester, who was not born until after the disaster, told me how her mother had described that terrible black night when she and her four little girls were flung into the cold sea. Frantically, she had tried to save them. Barely, she had been able to touch with her fingertips the hem of the little gown of one, but could not grasp it. She herself had been miraculously rescued as she floated unconscious on a piece of flotsam.

During Mr. Spafford's voyage to join his wife in France, the captain summoned him one day to the bridge. Pointing to his charts he explained that it was just here, where they were at that moment, that the other ship had gone down. Spafford wrote the

hymn which has comforted countless thousands (among them five widows at a memorial service in Ecuador in 1956).

When peace like a river attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea-billows roll,  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
"It is well, it is well with my soul."

That word *lot* is not one we often use in quite that way. It means whatever happens, that which comes by the will of the powers that rule our destiny, a share, a portion, an assignment. When we draw lots, no human power controls which will be ours.

But Christians know that we are not at the mercy of chance. A loving hand, a great wisdom, and an omnipotent power rule our destiny. The government of all is on the mighty shoulders of Christ Himself, who sees all long before it happens. *All* is intended for our blessing. How different things look to us! Yet think of the faith of Horatio Spafford, suffering the loss of all his children, writing, "Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, 'It is well....'"

To love God is to love His will. That which He gives we receive. That which He takes we relinquish, "as glad to know ourselves in the hands of God as we should be sorry to be in our own," as Fenelon said. With what astonishment—of gladness or sadness—we receive some things! With what reluctance or delight we relinquish others! Yet we find that we can bear our own sufferings, while of others' sufferings we say, "That I could never bear!" Jim, whose wife has cancer, wrote to me, "The assignment is so hard, but always there are the gracious gifts—the winks of heaven—a friend stopping by, a plumber coming at the perfect moment. Coincidences? Not to one with the eyes of faith."

God shields us from most of the things we fear, but when He chooses not to shield us, He unflinchingly *allots* grace in the measure needed. It is for us to choose to receive or refuse it. Our joy or our misery will depend on that choice.

## Quickener of Spirits

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11, KJV).

Quickener of spirits, teach me what it means  
To bear about the dying of my Lord.

On stony roads, far from the land of dreams,  
Teach me to walk according to that word.

For love of thee, Lord of the thorn-crowned brow,  
Myself I would surrender unto death.

Nail to Thy Cross all Thou dost disallow,  
Breathe through my being, O Thou heavenly  
Breath.

That I may shew Thy life, meet Thy desire,  
Bend all my powers to Thine obedience,  
Blow, winnowing Wind, burn, burn, O purging  
Fire,  
Shine forth, O Lord, in Thy Pre-eminence.

Amy Carmichael

## Children of Dohnavur

The Dohnavur Fellowship, Amy Carmichael's wonderful work for children in South India, continues, begun by foreigners, led now only by Indians. The following charming bits are from their newsletter, *Dust of Gold*:

"Every year on the third Sunday in January, our special Thankoffering Service is held. It is the time when the children are given an opportunity to give something for the poor—sweets, toys, or cards. These are kept and given as Christmas presents to the hospital patients at the end of the year. The adults offer money, which is sent to twelve different missions. This year six-year-old Jeevaranie was asked what she was going to give for the poor. She replied that she wasn't going to give anything for the poor but she would give a blue plastic bowl to the Lord. When asked why she wanted to give Him a bowl, she said, 'I want to give Jesus a bowl because He has lots of fruit in heaven and He can keep His fruit in it.'

"Three-year-old Anburani was given some sweets to put in the offering basket. Her Accal [the Indian woman who mothers her] told her that if she wanted to eat the sweets she could, but if she wanted to give them to the Lord, she should do so joyfully and wholeheartedly. After the service she came back to say, 'I ate the sweets joyfully and wholeheartedly

and I put the wrappers joyfully and wholeheartedly in the offering basket. Jesus can use them for wrapping sweets.' Little Anburani is very fond of her food, and especially of her sweets!"

Not only do the Dohnavur people make a home for hundreds of children. There is also a hospital and village outreach in many forms. Two hundred fifty patients came to the annual Leprosy Feast last year. Twelve babies and small girls were entrusted to the Fellowship in that year, and the cottages are nearly full. A new one will have to be opened to accommodate the next children given.

No appeals for money are ever made, but those who are willing to *pray* for this work may subscribe to *Dust of Gold*, which is always beautifully done. I read it at once when it arrives, and then pray through the Praise and Prayer list for several days. Subscriptions are gratis—you are asked only to pray. Address: Mrs. J.R. Sessions, 3737 West Lake Dr., Augusta, GA 30907. Phone: (706)860-6470.

## A Man's Advice to Wives

One of my radio listeners who tells me he has had many setbacks graciously offers some things we wives would do well to consider.

"Turn your husband in prayer over to the Lord Jesus, trust Him, love that man, spiritually and sexually. Yield to the Lord and the Holy Spirit.

"Let your kisses be warm and tender. Let your husband be who he is. A man tenderly received will be fulfilled by your prayer, by your physical response. And he will gradually turn to Jesus in you. You must be willing to look at the good in your man, and keep your eyes on Jesus.

"Maybe you desire a man who would pray with you as often as he would like to make love to you, but he's not quite there. He may be a good and tender man, and God knows your needs. Through our suffering we see Christ do a work in us, and in those around us.

"We must decrease so He can increase.

---

Up to 100 copies of an article may be made for private distribution but not for resale. Please cite full credit as given below. For permission to make more than 100 copies of an article, please write to the Newsletter.

© Copyright 1995 by Elisabeth Elliot Gren

*The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter* is published six times a year by Servant Publications. The cost is \$7.00 per year. Tax-deductible donations make it possible for those who are unable to pay to receive the letter free. Please send donations to: The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, P.O. Box 7711, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711.

"Speak the truth in love."

Surely any husband who should chance to read the above would say amen. And we wives? Would our first reaction be, "Lord, help me to learn"? Or would it be, "And what about us wives?" O God, to us may grace be given to receive correction.

### *A Woman Who Learned*

"In the last years there have been many trials. For two weeks now he has neither touched nor spoken to me except when necessary, or to maintain a facade around our children. This is his way of coping with conflict, such as a disagreement between us. Sometimes his silence lasts for a month. I try to communicate. I write love notes. I tell him every day that I love him. I try to do things for him. No response.

"I used to respond by 'getting mad back at him,' but that only ruins my spiritual relationship with the Lord. I am slowly but surely realizing I must do two things:

"1. Rely totally on the Lord for the emotional support that as a woman I badly need, and

"2. Give him love, with no expectations, regardless of how he is treating me at the time—such a difficult lesson, but there are great rewards when I slowly stumble upon the realization that the Lord really *can* meet my needs! The Psalms have become especially precious to me: 'Wait on the Lord, be of good courage.' My daily prayer is, 'Lord, You know, You care, You understand, and You *love* me.' Lately I am able to add, 'And that is *enough*.'"

St. Francis de Sales, always so refreshingly down-to-earth, offers this wisdom which lifted me straight out of the doldrums one day:

"Accustom yourself to unreasonableness and injustice. Abide in peace in the presence of God, who sees all these evils more clearly than you do, and who permits them. Be content with doing with calmness the little which depends upon yourself, and let all else be to you as if it were not."

Jesus, when He was about to leave His disciples, said, "I have told you these things so that *in me* you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NIV, italics mine).

### *A Little Boy's Song*

Theodore Flagg Shepard, known as Theo, is Number Seven of Valerie's eight. It took him longer than his

older brothers and sisters to learn to talk. Last Christmas I made a concerted effort to persuade him to put together three words. He could do two, but balked at three.

"Theo," said I, "say, 'I love Jim.'"

"Jim."

"No, Theo. 'I love Jim.'"

"I."

Sentences seemed to be beyond him, although his vocabulary astonished us sometimes. When his father suggested that Theo might want to try swimming without his water wings, he thought about that with knitted brows, then said, "Dad—*sink!*" But suddenly a month or so after Christmas he burst into fluent talk, and in April he sent me a tape on which he sang perfectly, "Jesus is all the world to me." When he came to "When I am sad, He makes me *glad*," his voice squeaked but the pitch was true. May the words of that song be the truth of his life—that Jesus will matter more to him than anything else.

### *The Long Leisure of Eternity*

In Maud Monahan's *Life and Letters of Janet Erskine Stuart* she describes the long years of waiting on God, and how He took nine years, "with all the long leisure of Eternity," to bring her to a guide who would "lead her soul out into paths of confidence and joy."

That word helped me to see that some of what I would have called my own stalling and obtuseness may have been the Lord's own timing. He makes us *wait*. He keeps us on purpose in the dark. He makes us walk when we want to run, sit still when we want to walk, for He has things to do in our souls that we are not interested in.

There have been times, on the other hand, when He wanted me to run but I only walked: Let me remember, however, that the Shepherd Himself sometimes makes us lie down. Some of the "delays" are His own choice for us, so we must not always chide ourselves when the pace is not what we thought it should be. We must learn to move according to the timetable of the Timeless One, and be at peace.

"My times are in Thy hands" (Psalm 31:15). That is where I want them to be, Father. May I rest in the sure knowledge that my hours and days are safely kept.

## Prayer

O God, who makest cheerfulness and companion of strength, but apt to take wings in time of sorrow, we humbly beseech Thee that if, in Thy sovereign wisdom, Thou sendest weakness, yet for Thy mercy's sake deny us not the comfort of patience. Lay not more upon us, O heavenly Father, than Thou wilt enable us to bear; and, since the fretfulness of our spirits is more hurtful than the heaviness of our burden, grant us that heavenly calmness which comes of owning Thy hand in all things, and patience in the trust that Thou doest all things well. Amen.

Rowland Williams, 1818-1870

## Honeymoon Tape

Parts of this were made on my honeymoon with Jim Elliot in 1953. He tells a witch doctor story, we sing, jungle sounds are recorded, and Valerie speaks Auca at the age of three. Order from Lars Gren, 10 Strawberry Cove, Magnolia MA 01930. \$5 includes postage.

### Keep in Touch

Are you moving? Getting married? Leaving school? *Don't forget to send us your change of address.* The post office DOES NOT FORWARD third class mail like the Newsletter. *Please remove your address label below and send it with your new address to: The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter, Post Office Box 7711, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-7711.*

## The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

Servant Ministries, Inc.  
Post Office Box 7711  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-7711

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Travel Schedule September-November 1995

**September 8-9** Wentzville, Mo.; First Baptist Church women's retreat, Nancee Dutchik, (314)625-1898; church phone (314)327-8696.

**September 10-11** Highland Park, Mich.; Revival Tabernacle, (313)869-0140.

**September 14** South Hamilton, Mass.; Gordon-Conwell Seminary.

**September 17** South Hamilton, Mass.; Christ Church adult class, (508) 468-4461.

**September 22-23** North Kingston, R.I.; women's retreat, Bonnie Barnett, 401 Davisville Rd., North Kingston, RI 02852.

**October 6-16** Speaking tour in Norway.

**October 21** Peoria, Ill.; Illinois Prison Ministry, (309)673-6794.

**October 22-24** Bloomington, Ind.; Evangelical Community Church, (812)332-0502.

**October 26-28** Seattle, Wash.; Convention Center, Ligonier Ministries' conference, 1-800-435-4343.

**November 2** Nyack, N.Y.; Nyack College, Karen Dewey, (914)358-1710.

**November 3-4** Norfolk, Va.; Tabernacle Church, (804)423-8266.

**November 6-7** Taping for *Gateway to Joy*.

**November 12-13** Baton Rouge, La.; First Presbyterian Church, (504)387-3221.

**November 14** Gulfport, Miss.; Broadwater Beach Hotel, women's luncheon, Dale Simpkins, (601) 864-4856, or Virginia Wagner, (601) 467-7872.

**November 23** THANKSGIVING.

Non-profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 14  
Ann Arbor, MI